

Minutes of the Regional Planning Commission
Tuesday, September 15, 2009, 4:00 p.m.
Lake County Division of Transportation Libertyville, IL

The Regional Planning Commission met with the following in attendance:

Members Present:

Marvin Raymond – Chair
Charles J. Lucas – Vice Chair
Craig Ellison
~~Lawrence Falbe~~
Paul Geiselhart
~~William Holleman~~
~~Donald Klein~~
Rory Klick
~~Marie Lyons~~
Jordan Madorsky
Loraine Ray
~~Bryan Rouse~~
Terry L. Weppler
Charles Willms

Planning Staff:

Megan Krueger
Bill Hunt
David Husemoller
Philip Rovang

Ex-Officios:

Others:

Mary Jane Lucas
Vicky Ranney, Illinois Organic Food & Farm Task Force
Jim Braun, Illinois Organic Food & Farm Task Force
Sharon Martinez, Smart Farm
Debbie Hillman, Illinois Organic Food & Farm Task Force
John Roszkowski, Pioneer Press

1.0 CALL TO ORDER – the meeting was officially called to order by Chairman Raymond at 4:01 pm.

2.0 APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

2.1 Motion: Motion to approve the minutes from the August 18, 2009 Regional Planning Commission Meeting.
Made by: Commissioner Madorsky
Seconded by: Commissioner Ellison
Action: Approved unanimously.

3.0 ADDED TO AGENDA ITEMS - None

4.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

5.0 CHAIRMAN’S REMARKS - None

6.0 PLAN REVIEWS AND HEARINGS – None

7.0 OLD BUSINESS - None

8.0 NEW BUSINESS

8.1 Review of Local Food Issues and Opportunities in Lake County

Mr. David Husemoller discussed the events of the coming months with regard to the request of the Planning, Building and Zoning Committee. Because of the review of the text

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amendments, the date for submission of the report on Local Food Production to the PB&Z Committee will be in November or December of 2009.

8.2 Vicky Ranney and Debbie Hillman: Illinois Local and Organic Farm and Food Task Force

Ms. Vicky Ranney stated that she and her husband were the developers of Prairie Crossing. The subdivision was designed around the farm with the intention of promoting local food production. She went on to say that she has been a member of the state Local Food Task Force for the past two years, and the Task Force will complete its work at the end of this year. She has worked closely with Ms. Debbie Hillman and Mr. Jim Braun, who were both coordinators of this Task Force.

Ms. Ranney explained that the recommendations of the Task Force were condensed into legislation, which became law this last summer. This legislation will continue to increase the state's food sustainability by ten to fifteen percent each year.

Ms. Debbie Hillman stated that she is a lifelong resident of the North Shore area, and has been involved with food production for many years. She helped to establish the Evanston Food Policy Council in 2005. The council encouraged the residents to begin thinking locally with regard to food production because food production is where humans impact the Earth the most, and food production is intertwined with many other aspects of health and productivity.

Ms. Hillman went on to say that as a result of the recent legislation discussed by Ms. Ranney, the Illinois Local Food, Farms and Jobs council has been created that will work from a strategic plan to build the entire local food system to include: production, processing and distribution networks, and retail access.

Commissioner Klick entered the meeting at 4:16 pm.

Mr. Jim Braun stated that the interest in local food production is becoming more widespread. Mr. Braun further explained how sustainability is more than local food production. Sustainability encompasses the increased health of the residents by making fresh fruits and vegetables more accessible, the decrease in unemployment by creating more jobs and entrepreneurial options, and the increase in revenues for the local and state economies. This represents only the initial layer of the overall picture of sustainability. Mr. Braun stressed that while Lake County is one of the counties on the forefront of this movement, there are many agencies that would be willing to help guide the course of action. Lake County could create a model that could be used by other counties and municipalities.

Chairman Raymond stated that when the process of determining the scope of this initiative began, many of the Commissioners were frustrated at the lack of direction.

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He explained that through the process the focus has become clear, and the amount of information for the Commission has made their decision making process easier.

Vice-Chairman Lucas asked how many other states have initiated the process of sustainable agriculture.

Mr. Braun stated that Illinois is the first, but many states are following the lead of the state.

Commissioner Ray asked the panel if they had any recommendations for the Commission that could assist the initiative.

Ms. Hillman stated that she would suggest the implementation of farming programs within the County as a stepping stone. One option is farm to school food production; in which the farm is located on the school grounds and the students do the farming. The students can be taught endless lessons under this option, and they are sustaining themselves at the same time.

Commissioner Madorsky suggested promoting locally grown food to low-income families through the LINK program; encourage fresh fruits and vegetables.

Mr. Braun explained that the Illinois Department of Human Services administers the SNAP program, which is the first step in the process to which Commissioner Madorsky referred. The director of the SNAP program for Illinois will be the Department of Human Services representative on the task force, and will be working toward implementing this type of program.

Commissioner Klick explained that in her previous experience, economically underprivileged families are willing to purchase fresh foods but they do not have the transportation and means to make purchases. In some areas the LINK cards and WIC vouchers are accepted for payment, but not all vendors have the capacity to accept these forms of payment as independent farmers. Simple coordination of the vendors and the food programs would be a great improvement.

Ms. Hillman explained that the municipalities are also becoming more involved in the sustainability effort in new ways. Next week there will be a showing of a film in Evanston titled "Mad City Chickens" demonstrating backyard chicken farming and documenting the process of Madison, Wisconsin to allow small animal farming in residential areas.

Mr. Braun suggested that the Commissioners contact Mr. Rob Marqusee in Woodbury County, Iowa (712.389.2049). He has been very successful in implementing a local food initiative through the Economic Development Department.

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Ms. Ranney explained that while the farm at Prairie Crossing was established before the subdivision, it was designed to fit in to the urban/residential environment. There are developers all across the country that have created small farms within the residential environment; some were modeled after Prairie Crossing. She went on to say that producing this type of small urban farm is what will initiate the entire process; there are many areas of unutilized land within the County where these farms could be established. The farms would create jobs and training opportunities for individuals in need of career direction, and it would begin local sustainability. Urban farms do not require large equipment, but zoning changes may be required.

Mr. Braun added that there are advantages to establishing urban farms as they do not experience the same kinds of problems that are typically associated with rural farming. Weeds that characteristically grow in rural fields do not thrive in urban areas. Likewise, urban farms do not encounter problems with insects and small animals that destroy crops in rural areas.

Sharon Martinez, a member of the public, spoke about a project in which she is involved called Smart Farm in the Barrington area. She described some of the initiatives and outcomes of the project during the inaugural year.

Commissioner Klick shared some good news regarding the College of Lake County, which will be developing a campus farm on 60,000 square feet of land. There is a planned green house for ten-month growing, and the food produced will go to the food services division for direct consumption by the students. She will update the Commission with details of the plan as they are available.

Mr. David Husemoller stated that he has talked with a couple of individuals that own land within Lake County that are interested in beginning small organic farms. He has given these people contact information for some of the people within the industry that have addressed the Commission regarding local food production. Mr. Husemoller went on to say that there are mentors and training available but there are still a lot of other pieces of the puzzle that are missing. He stated that he will make a list of the policy topics for the Commission to review to act as a guide toward their final outcome. He further explained that the Commission may wish to form a food policy council that would assist in the process. At the Commission's request, Mr. Husemoller said that he would contact Mr. Rob Marqusee from Woodbury County, Iowa to solicit from him some further direction.

9.0 OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Chairman's Report – None

9.2 Commissioners' Comments - None

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9.3 Director's Report

Mr. Rovang announced to the Commission that the Planning, Building and Development Department has been awarded a one hundred thousand dollar grant through the federal government to develop a model green building code in conjunction with the area municipalities.

Mr. Rovang explained to the Commissioners that Sexton Properties is nine months into an eighteen-month testing phase for their proposed wind farm. The state legislation regarding the review and approval for wind farm sitting is not productive. If the area is unincorporated, any village within a mile and a half has authority for approval. The Sexton property is located near three municipal boundaries but is located in unincorporated Lake County. Staff received authorization from the PB&Z Committee to begin working on an intergovernmental agreement among these villages and the County to reach an agreement with regard to the proposed Sexton wind farm.

9.4 Ex-Officio Reports – None

10.0 ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To adjourn the September 15, 2009, RPC Meeting at 5:56 p.m.
Made by: Commissioner Madorsky
Seconded by: Commissioner Wepler
Action: Approved unanimously

Marvin J. Raymond – Commission Chairman

Rory Klick

Charles J. Lucas – Vice-Chairman

~~Marie C. Lyons~~

Craig Ellison

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Donald P. Klein

Terry L. Weppeler

Megan Krueger – Recording Secretary

Charles Willms